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Cutting Down the White House Staff

For all the Republican talk about "fiscal responsibility" and "financial integrity," it appears that even that peerless leader, President Eisenhower, was spending more money on White House operations than any of his predecessors ever dreamed of.

After looking over the situation with his special counsel, Clark Clifford, who will fill an important job in the coming administration, President-elect John F. Kennedy has said he sees a way to rid the executive offices of a substantial amount of what he calls surplus personnel.

To hear the GOP tell it, the Democrats were the only ones who ever spent any money on "big government." But from President Hoover's personal staff of five, Franklin D. Roosevelt increased his "brain trust" to just 14. Harry Truman had a personal staff of only 15, but clerical personnel, mostly from the Civil Service rolls, increased the total to 262 as more agencies were added to the Executive Office of the President.

The staff concept of running the executive department came into being when Gen. Eisenhower entered the White House. Quickly the number of White House staff jumped to 395, of whom 47 could be classified as personal aides. A separate force of 72 maintained the mansion and grounds.

Overflowing the west wing of the White House itself, the staff occupied a considerable part of the hideous old State, War and Navy Department building across the street. As of Jan. 1, 1959, the total number attached to the Executive Office was 2,574. These included 1,688 in the Office of Defense Mobilization, 423 in the Bureau of the Budget, 62 in the National Security Council, 53 in the Council of Economic Advisors and an undi-

closed number in the top-secret Central Intelligence Agency.

The President-elect has made it plain he will not fill the office held under Eisenhower by the ill-fated Sherman Adams. He plans to make top policy himself and not have it processed through an Assistant to the President.

It is said that Eisenhower, before Adams fell afoul of vicuna coats and the like, wouldn't even look at a paper until it bore the initials, "S.A.," and indicating that it had been "cleared with Sherman." From all indications, Jack Kennedy wants to know what's going on at every level without having the material reviewed in advance through a long chain of command.

In the normal course of "changing the guard," Kennedy may find it difficult to turn down all the requests from deserving Democrats he has been receiving in wholesale lots since the early morning of Nov. 9. Most members of that party are steeped in the doctrine of Andrew Jackson, and they'd like to share the spoils of victory.

Kennedy owes his success in the election to a great many people, but the plain fact is that the closeness of the popular vote leaves another substantial group without the opportunity to say that the rewards should go alone to them. The weird manner in which states switched from the pre-election predictions elevated some to positions where their pictures replaced others on the Kennedy piano, as the saying goes.

The President-elect's goals of finding a simpler and less costly way of running the White House and Executive Office of the President are admirable, and all but the most unappeasable patronage seekers will wish him the best of luck

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